

Moving the Needle

NO. 5 •



PHILIPP C. JESSUP MOOT COMPETITION

Embassy facilitates first
Tunisian participation

WAGES NOFO ANNOUNCEMENT

Submit your proposal before June
15

INTERNATIONAL KRAM FAIR

Ambassador Hood meets
with ACEA project artisans

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The U.S. Embassy's Assistance Unit (AU) provides programming that responds to the needs of the Tunisian people to accelerate economic development and strengthen democracy. The AU works in coordination with other U.S. government agencies as well as the international community to target distinct and defined elements of Tunisian economic and governance reforms. The AU manages projects funded through Economic Support Bilateral Funds, Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) local grants, and three MEPI leadership programs.



U.S. Embassy Tunis

ANNOUNCEMENT



U.S. Embassy Tunisia announces a \$1.5-million Women in Agriculture Gain Economic Security (WAGES) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to empower Tunisian women in agriculture to mitigate climate change impacts, increase profitability, and combat food insecurity. WAGES promotes women's economic security and improves their business acumen. Join us in advancing women's economic future and submit your proposal before **June 15**.

You can find more information in the following link: bit.ly/3LJvtUe

AU WORKSHOP SPURS COLLABORATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES

During a May 17 workshop hosted by the Assistance Unit (AU), stakeholders from international and Tunisian implementing partners, alongside external experts, convened to address the challenges posed by the shrinking civic space and discuss support opportunities. The workshop served as a valuable platform for participants to exchange best practices and innovative ideas. Implementers showcased their resilience and optimism, emphasizing the importance of lasting partnerships and sustaining momentum to navigate current challenges. The conversations produced inspiration for future Embassy assistance programs that effectively spur sustainable growth and empower civil society and human rights activists. The importance of maintaining an open dialogue and fostering international cooperation cannot be overstated in this endeavor. By joining forces, we can uphold fundamental rights, while simultaneously creating a vibrant and inclusive civic space in Tunisia. The AU workshop signifies a unified commitment towards a brighter future for all.





U.S. Embassy Tunis

EVENTS

AMBASSADOR HOOD CELEBRATES PROMISE PROJECT ENTREPRENEURS

Ambassador Joey Hood met a group of Tunisian entrepreneurs on May 16 who, thanks to the PROMISE project, benefited from access to U.S. business platforms and opportunities by participating in the SelectUSA Investment Summit in Maryland, as well as the PROMISE Exchange Program in New York and Washington D.C.



These initiatives helped the entrepreneurs meet with some of the brightest business minds in the world, showcase their innovative ideas, and forge important partnerships.



The U.S. Embassy is proud to support the aspirations and ambitions of talented Tunisian youth. By providing them with the necessary resources and platforms to pursue their dreams, we are actively fostering an environment where entrepreneurship can thrive.



"WE RECOGNIZE THE CRITICAL ROLE THAT
YOUTH LIKE YOURSELVES PLAY IN
CREATING JOBS, DRIVING INNOVATION,
AND ADVANCING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY."
AMBASSADOR JOEY HOOD



U.S. Embassy Tunis



"Your presence here today demonstrates the strength of the partnership between Tunisia and the United States and the importance we place on promoting entrepreneurship and economic growth." Ambassador Joey Hood



U.S. Embassy Tunis

EVENTS



Ambassador Hood's Inspiring Visit to International Kram Fair Unveils Artisans' Accomplishments

Ambassador Hood visited the International Kram Fair on March 10, where they met with a group of artisans who are using a new Embassy funded e-commerce platform to sell their essential oil, olive wood, textile, and pottery products domestically and internationally.

The Kram Fair served as the perfect opportunity, providing a vibrant venue for artisans to exhibit their stunning creations while connecting with eager U.S. buyers and potential investors.

With a passion for showcasing the richness of Tunisia's traditional craftsmanship, these artisans are breaking barriers and reaching new horizons by selling their exquisite products. Thanks to the Embassy funded \$5.6 million handicraft project, these skilled artisans are not only transforming their own lives but also creating countless job opportunities within their communities.

Tunisian artisans have undoubtedly made a lasting impression on the international stage, with the United States standing as their top destination. In the past decade alone, the exports of Tunisian handicrafts to the U.S. have witnessed an astounding surge, skyrocketing from less than 1 million Tunisian Dinars in 2011 to an impressive 40 million Tunisian Dinars in 2022.

“I’m proud that the U.S. is facilitating the participation of buyers from the United States in this year’s Kram fair because it will give skilled artisans across Tunisia access to new markets and create new employment opportunities.”

Ambassador Joey Hood



Enactus Tunisia: Empowering Students to Drive Social Entrepreneurship and Impact

Enactus Institut Supérieur d'Informatique (ISI) team achieved a remarkable feat, securing second place at the prestigious Enactus World Cup 2022 in Puerto Rico. Heartfelt congratulations to the entire team for their outstanding performance

Deputy Chief of Mission Natasha Franceschi had the pleasure to meet the Enactus ISI and Enactus board members to gain insights into their groundbreaking "EPACT" project.

The EPACT project is revolutionizing the agricultural landscape in Tunisia by developing an innovative formula for 100% locally made cattle feed. This solution offers Tunisian farmers a cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative to feed their cows and sheep. The U.S. Embassy takes immense pride in supporting and empowering talented youth like the Enactus ISI team, who embody the core values of leadership, social change, and creativity.





U.S. Embassy Tunis

EVENTS



"I was particularly struck by the relevance of EPACT to the current economic and environmental challenges in Tunisia. Providing a sustainable, environmentally ethical, and cost-efficient solution to produce locally made cattle feed solves one of the most threatening issues." - Deputy Chief of Mission – Natasha Franceschi



Ambassador Hood Hosts Iftar Celebration Fostering Cultural Exchange and Community Engagement

Ambassador Joey Hood, recognizing the importance of fostering cross-cultural engagement and strengthening ties between Tunisians and Americans, hosted an iftar with several exchange program alumni. This longstanding tradition holds deep historical significance, tracing back to the first iftar at the White House in 1805. During that time, President Thomas Jefferson extended his hospitality to Sidi Soliman Mellimelli, a Tunisian diplomatic envoy and one of the earliest Muslim envoys to the United States.

Inspired by this historical event, Ambassador Hood's iftar served as a testament to the enduring commitment of the U.S. Embassy in supporting youth and promoting intercultural understanding. By bringing together exchange program alumni, the event provided a platform for dialogue, mutual respect, and the celebration of shared values. It showcased the Embassy's dedication to nurturing a vibrant network of individuals who have participated in various leadership programs and have become catalysts for positive change in their respective communities.



U.S. Embassy Tunis

EVENTS



Ambassador Joey Hood Commemorates World Press Freedom Day with Arab Institute for Human Rights and Essaida FM Radio



On the May 3 occasion of the World Press Freedom Day, Ambassador Joey Hood paid a visit to the Arab Institute for Human Rights and conducted a radio interview with the Embassy funded Essaida FM radio.



A vibrant and independent press is a cornerstone for any healthy democracy, and we're proud to support civil society organizations throughout Tunisia that are strengthening the capacities of local journalists and advancing initiatives focused on transparency and access to information. To tune into Ambassador Hood's interview on Essaida FM.

Link: bit.ly/45xxzza



U.S. Embassy Tunis

NEWS IN BRIEF



INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

In collaboration with the Prime Ministry's Good Governance Administration, The Embassy funded “Increasing Accountability in Tunisia”, conducted a highly informative workshop dedicated to enhancing accountability and governance practices.

The workshop provided a valuable platform for sharing best practices and exploring effective strategies to strengthen accountability. Participants engaged in meaningful discussions, exchanging insights and experiences to pave the way for enhanced governance practices in Tunisia.

Political Counselor Heather Kalmbach attended the event and highlighted the crucial importance of fighting corruption as a strategic priority for the U.S. government.

The U.S. Embassy is committed to promoting transparency and accountability in Tunisia is unwavering. Since 2017, the U.S. Embassy has invested over \$15 million in initiatives aimed at bolstering these essential pillars across various sectors.



CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY: TOGETHER AGAINST CORRUPTION!

On the International Anti-Corruption Day, Political Counselor Heather Kalmbach joined a special event hosted by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) and Tunis Law School. This gathering celebrated the youth who have become passionate advocates in the fight against corruption in Tunisia. Through thought-provoking debates and captivating artistic performances, these remarkable young individuals showcased their unwavering dedication to creating a corruption-free society.

Fighting corruption is a global mission, and the United States stands firm in its commitment to combating this pervasive issue. At the U.S. Embassy, we take great pride in supporting initiatives that promote transparency and accountability in all sectors. As part of our efforts, we have partnered with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) on a project aimed at strengthening the Tunisian government's ability to investigate and prosecute corruption cases.



U.S. Embassy Tunis

NEWS IN BRIEF



EMPOWERING REGIONAL YOUTH: 2022 LEADERS FOR DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP INSPIRES POSITIVE CHANGE IN MENA

In a remarkable display of regional collaboration and youth empowerment, the 2022 Leaders for Development Fellowship (LDF) program brought together 24 talented fellows from 9 countries in the MENA region.

As part of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) LDF Arabic track program, these inspiring participants convened to share their aspirations as future leaders, committed to making meaningful and positive changes within their communities.

The U.S. Embassy is proud to support the youth of Tunisia and the entire MENA region, fostering their growth, and empowering them to create a brighter future.

If you would like to know more about the MEPI LDF program and other MEPI leadership programs, you can visit the following link: <https://tn.usembassy.gov/foreign.../mepi-leadership-programs/>



PROMISE PANEL EXPLORES INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY'S ROLE IN TUNISIA'S STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

On the occasion of World Intellectual Property Day, the Assistance Unit funded PROMISE project held a panel discussion titled "Intellectual Property at the Heart of Innovation in Tunisia: Challenges and Opportunities" on April 26.

This panel brought together intellectual property experts, innovators, and entrepreneurs to delve into the challenges and opportunities associated with intellectual property and its impact on driving innovation. The exchange of ideas aimed to identify the key expectations of the entrepreneurial ecosystem regarding intellectual property.

The U.S. Embassy proudly supports the PROMISE project, which seeks to foster innovation and empower entrepreneurs in Tunisia. By promoting awareness and understanding of intellectual property rights, the project aims to create an environment that nurtures creativity, rewards innovation, and enables the growth of startups.



U.S. Embassy Tunis

NEWS IN BRIEF

EMBASSY SUPPORTS FIRST EVER TUNISIAN DELEGATION AT INTERNATIONAL MOOT COURT COMPETITION!



Breaking barriers and making waves, four brilliant law students from the Tunis-Carthage School of Law embarked on a groundbreaking journey as they participated in the international rounds of the renowned Philipp C. Jessup Moot Competition. Held in Washington, D.C. from April 8-15, this momentous occasion marked Tunisia's inaugural presence in the world's oldest and most prestigious international moot court competition.

The team showcased their exceptional legal acumen, joining forces with 137 teams from across the globe to argue mock disputes before the esteemed International Court of Justice. Their intellectual prowess was put to the test, tackling complex issues such as interpreting peace treaties, addressing deadly attacks in alleged occupied territories, navigating unilateral economic sanctions, and delving into the legal consequences of improper hazardous waste disposal.



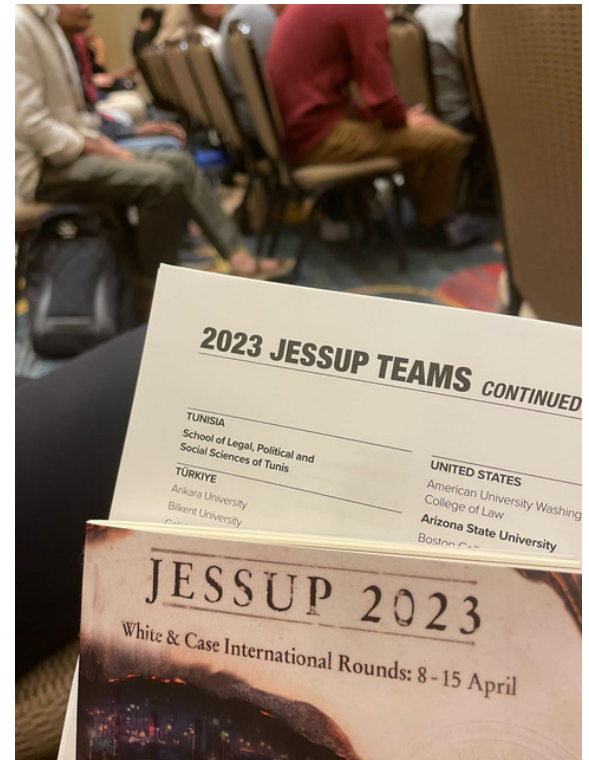
U.S. Embassy Tunis

NEWS IN BRIEF

EMBASSY-SUPPORTED TUNISIAN DELEGATION PARTICIPATE FOR THE FIRST TIME AT INTERNATIONAL MOOT COURT COMPETITION!

The project also facilitated a special visit to the D.C. Superior Court, granting the students the opportunity to witness in-person and hybrid hearings, and to engage with U.S. judges. This firsthand exposure to the complexities of the legal system provided invaluable insights and further enriched their educational journey.

Thanks to the Assistance Unit's "Increasing Accountability in Tunisia" project, these determined participants had the opportunity of a lifetime. The experience proved to be nothing short of "transformational and life-changing" for them, igniting their passion for legal excellence and international advocacy. Inspired by their journey, they have set their sights on launching a national competition in the near future, further nurturing legal talent within Tunisia.



NEWS IN BRIEF

PROMISE PROGRAM MARKS THIRD ANNIVERSARY, EMPOWERING TUNISIA'S ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM



At a celebration marking the third anniversary of the PROMISE program, Director of Near Eastern Affairs Assistance Coordination Office Danika Walters and Director of Smart Capital Tunisia Alaya Bettaieb acknowledged the remarkable achievements of the program. PROMISE has been instrumental in creating new job opportunities, supporting the launch and expansion of start-ups, and providing participants with crucial training on intellectual property rights. Additionally, the program has fostered valuable networking connections and facilitated entry into new markets, enabling growth for over 290 microenterprises.

The U.S. Embassy remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthening Tunisia's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Through initiatives like PROMISE, the Embassy actively works towards facilitating access to finance, promoting innovation, and empowering entrepreneurs to thrive.

SGHARTOON FEATURED DURING THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AND SCIENCE

In the celebration of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, the U.S. Embassy featured on its Facebook page the inspiring story of Hidayet Ayadi, the founder of Sghartoon, a start-up that designed a technology to identify the signs of learning disabilities in young children. The technology matches children with nearby therapists and uses digital games to diagnose learning differences. Hidayet is one of the 11 entrepreneurs who traveled to the United States as part of the U.S. Embassy's PROMISE project, where she pitched her project to investors.



NEWS IN BRIEF

BOOSTING AGRICULTURAL SECTOR GROWTH AND MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT ARE PRIORITIES FOR U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN TUNISIA.

Harnessing the power of innovation and sustainability, the U.S. Embassy supports the FARMER project, which has spearheaded a remarkable endeavor at the agricultural school in Chott Meriam. In the face of mounting climate change challenges to the agricultural sector, FARMER has pioneered a groundbreaking solution—an innovative soilless greenhouse using hydroponics technology.



This cutting-edge greenhouse not only addresses the pressing need to optimize water consumption but also ensures greater yields and healthier crops. By leveraging advanced techniques and state-of-the-art technology, FARMER has revolutionized traditional agricultural practices and paved the way for a more sustainable future.



The impact of the FARMER project goes beyond Chott Meriam. It aims to revitalize seven agricultural vocational training schools within the Agence de la Vulgarisation et de la Formation Agricoles (AVFA), transforming them into centers of excellence for young farmers throughout Tunisia.

Learn more about the Chott Mariem hydroponics greenhouse through this national TV segment: bit.ly/3wR0wpR



U.S. Embassy Tunis

TRIPS



AMBASSADOR JOEY HOOD WITNESSES THE IMPACT OF ASSISTANCE PROJECTS IN CAP BON

During his first visit to Cap Bon, Ambassador Hood had the privilege of engaging with dynamic Tunisian entrepreneurs who are driving innovation and economic growth in the agricultural and handicraft sectors. This memorable experience showcased the positive impact of U.S. assistance programs in empowering entrepreneurs throughout the region to establish sustainable and prosperous businesses.

A highlight of the visit was the engaging stop at the 1KUB incubator, a beneficiary of the Embassy funded Impact Finance project, which is dedicated to supporting and investing in women-led startups. Ambassador Hood witnessed the remarkable determination and innovation displayed by these entrepreneurs, recognizing their invaluable contributions in driving economic growth and gender equality. Additionally, the Ambassador's visit to the Takelsa Agricultural Center within the FARMER project showcased its leadership in connecting local farmers with American agricultural experts. Together, they are tackling the challenges posed by climate change through the implementation of innovative technologies. One such pilot technology significantly reduces water usage in agriculture, addressing environmental concerns while ensuring the long-term viability of the sector.

Ambassador Hood's visit underscored the U.S. Embassy's commitment to supporting Tunisian entrepreneurs and their vital role in building thriving businesses. By fostering collaboration, providing expertise, and promoting sustainable practices, these initiatives create an enabling environment for entrepreneurs to flourish and contribute to their communities.

AMBASSADOR HOOD'S TRIP TO THE NORTHWEST

Did you know the United States is the top destination for Tunisian handicrafts? Demonstrating the U.S. Embassy's commitment to this vibrant handicraft sector, the U.S. Embassy is proud of successfully delivering new essential oil distillation equipment through the Collaborative Action for Handicraft Exports (ACEA) project. The ACEA project directly benefits over 300 women artisans in Tunisia's Northwest region.

In a momentous occasion, Ambassador Joey Hood attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Oued Maaden Cooperative in Beja. This event provided a platform to showcase the transformative impact of the new equipment on these women-led businesses, enabling them to significantly increase their production capacity.

The Ambassador reaffirmed the U.S. Embassy's unwavering support for entrepreneurs in the handicraft sector. By providing resources and opportunities, the Embassy aims to foster job creation and preserve Tunisia's rich cultural heritage.



WE LOVE PETS, AND SO DOES DHIA

Dhia Zitouni is a 2017 MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders student. This four-year MEPI scholarship allowed Dhia to pursue a bachelor's degree in business administration at the American University of Beirut (AUB) where he graduated with distinction. He then moved to his first job as a business development manager at a startup called ChefXChange. At ChefXChange, Dhia quickly became the head of a small strategic business unit called Mama's Tabkha. He is an entrepreneur at heart and a true inspiration to Tunisian youth.

Through a network he built, Dhia managed a small, yet innovative digital advertising agency called G-dice Hub. The challenge was to create an agency that survives the transition between managers and the subsequent client loss, the restructuring of resources, and the creation of a growth strategy that is both attainable and scalable.



His most recent venture is Petsigo, the first reimbursement-based digital insurance for pets in Tunisia. YES, you heard it right, insurance for pets. It is accessible via a user-friendly mobile application that offers services including locating nearby vets, submitting a claim to receive reimbursement, blog articles, and other pet-related posts.

You can find out more about Dhia's company and download the app via this website: www.petsigo.com

TUNISIAN YOUTH DRIVES POSITIVE CHANGE IN GABES

Ehsen Amri, a 2014 MEPI Student Leaders Program (SLP) alumnus, is making a remarkable impact in his hometown of Gabes. As the co-founder of Volonté et Citoyenneté, a youth-led NGO, Ehsen is dedicated to community empowerment, local governance, and socio-economic inclusion.

Through his participation in the SLP, Ehsen gained valuable leadership and project management skills, fostering his passion for making a difference. In the lead-up to the 2019 Legislative elections, he spearheaded the "Tunisian Initiative for Youth Inclusion," supported by MEPI. The project provided training to over 90 aspiring young politicians and facilitated voter education campaigns, reaching thousands of citizens through innovative methods such as graffiti art, talk-radio shows, and online dialogues.



In 2020, Ehsen launched the "Tasharok for Community Empowerment" project, focusing on improving public services and waste management in the Basboubssa community. His organization also assisted the municipality of Bouchamma in developing a municipal waste management plan, becoming the first of 16 municipalities in Gabes to do so. Additionally, Ehsen's organization empowered seven women by teaching them valuable skills and supporting the establishment of microbusinesses, enabling them to generate income for their families and community.

Ehsen's dedication to creating positive change demonstrates the resilience and impact of Tunisian youth. Through his leadership, Gabes is experiencing tangible improvements in various areas, addressing pressing issues and fostering social cohesion.

QARTAJ.COM: EMPOWERING RURAL ARTISANS AND PRESERVING TUNISIAN HERITAGE

Inspired by the history of ancient Carthage, Moncef Ben Rejeb, an alum of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)'s Leaders for Development Fellowship (LDF), created Qartaj.com to help small businesses and women artisans in rural regions of Tunisia to market their products worldwide. Qartaj.com is the first Tunisia based fairtrade wholesaler of artisanal products.

The LDF program taught Moncef how to infuse his business idea with social entrepreneurship values and better adapt to market trends. By collaborating with local designers to translate international market the project reduces the number of intermediary buyers, allowing them women artisans in Kef, Siliana, and Kairouan to export products directly and capture more of the profit. Moncef's Sustainable Online Market for Farmers project is one example of his focus on social causes. Qartaj also operates the "Face Tunisia" project, which supports local female artisans to preserve the Berber culture of Sejnan.



Through his platform, Moncef helped artisans collaborate with designers from their regions to create a new collection of handmade rugs, olive wood items, textiles (foutas), and homeware that stayed true to the traditions of generations of women before them. If you are planning to purchase Tunisian goods, <https://qartaj.com/> offers you the best collection of authentic artisanal products.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Wajdi Hamza, a MEPI Leaders for Development (LDF) alumnus, is dedicated to promoting good governance and building trust in public institutions. Inspired by his participation in the 2018 LDF program, Wajdi embarked on a journey to make a positive impact on his community and engage in public affairs. As a lawyer, Wajdi recognized the challenges faced by young people due to a lack of opportunities and effective participation in various fields. Through the LDF program, he gained valuable knowledge and a new perspective on planning and implementation, realizing the importance of collaboration and teamwork.

MEPI provided Wajdi with a platform to exchange ideas and opportunities, connecting him with like-minded individuals who supported and encouraged his goals. Following his participation in the LDF program, Wajdi initiated the Citoyen-Gov initiative, focusing on building public trust and strengthening the social fabric.



Through citizen cafés and virtual national consultations, Wajdi brought together diverse groups and individuals to engage in practical dialogues and develop initiatives that address common needs. His efforts aimed to reverse low levels of public confidence and address root causes of societal challenges such as crime, immigration, and the informal economy. Wajdi actively supported his community through various initiatives. He participated in the MEPI Day of Service for three consecutive years, organized a virtual fundraising challenge for the Ministry of Health's 1818 Fund during the Covid-19 pandemic, and conducted a virtual workshop to counter misinformation about the coronavirus.

In 2022, Wajdi promoted the historic city of Makthar by organizing Taekwondo training sessions for youth at the Maktaris archaeological site. This initiative aimed to engage youth in sports activities, promote the region, and counter violence.



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